



Unraveling the mysteries of lightning

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by Tess Lavezzi Light

When thunderstorm season rolls around and lightning streaks the sky, we likely don't ponder the mysteries it presents. Lightning seems to be one of those things we've got figured out. Didn't we learn everything we need to know when Benjamin Franklin flew his kite on a stormy day in a Pennsylvania field in 1752?

Not quite.

Los Alamos National Laboratory is working to change that. Because lightning produces optical and radio frequency signals similar to those from a nuclear explosion, it's important to be able to distinguish whether such signals are caused by lightning or a nuclear event. As part of the global security mission at Los Alamos, scientists use lightning to help develop better instruments for nuclear test-ban treaty monitoring and, in the process, have learned a lot about lightning itself.

Watch the [YouTube video](#).

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